

# “I am a Gospie Woman”: On Language in the Courtroom Discourse during the Salem Witch Trials, with Special Reference to Female Examinees

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The Salem witch trial documents offer challenging and inspiring material for many different research approaches. For historians and socio-historians they provide a view into the strictly regulated life and customs of a Puritan community. Various linguistic frameworks can also be applied to the data, depending on which aspects of the discourse are in focus. Hiltunen (2010: 61), amongst others, emphasizes the importance of context for historical discourse linguistics. He refers to the historical, social and cultural context; to the legal context, involving the representation of original spoken discourse in writing; and to the communicative context, involving the discourse strategies of the actual trials. In his study on medieval Russian trial documents, Collins (2001: xiv) provides evidence for the context sensitivity of reported speech. According to him,

the choice of strategy is oriented to the intended interpreter in the reporting situation. Speakers and writers choose the form that they perceive as potentially most effective for what they want to communicate and, concomitantly, for how they intend to organize their texts. Their perceptions are socially grounded – based on their experiential knowledge of how a specific kind of audience goes about interpreting the discourse in particular contextualizations and in particular genres.

A particular challenge for a study of reported speech in written form, as in the Salem examination documents, is to try to find ways to define the roles of the recorder and the speaker in the written text in each individual case. That brings into the picture the “data problem,” i.e. how reliable the data are for such a study (see e.g. Kytö and Walker 2003). To follow Collins’s way of thinking (2001: xv–xvi), one should recontextualize the texts as acts of communication, and that requires attention to particular contexts (linguistic, textual and social/institutional). Culpeper and Kytö (2010) also stress that in historical material an added complication in constructing identities is the fact that in the data available we are dealing with textual (re)presentations of male and female identities (308). In a reliable analysis of court records, one should ideally also be able to take into account various kinds of concrete obstacles, like problems with hearing and understanding speech in a courtroom, which may have additionally been worsened by deficient grammar, different educational backgrounds and different cultural obstacles (see e.g. Kryk-Kastovsky 2002: 213).

Salem Village, as the whole Puritan New England, was a society with strict gender roles. An interesting question is why women were more often singled out as perpetrators of bewitchments, both in everyday life and in criminal trials (de Blécourt 2000: 288). Even though witch-hunts were not directly gender based, they were gender related to a considerable extent (see e.g. Bever 2002; de Blécourt 2000; Reis 1998). A witch could be either male or female, but according to the statistics, in New England, the convicted witch was usually (some 80%) a woman above 40 years of age, even though all age groups, children included, could be accused of witchcraft (Karlsen 1987). Why would it be so that the majority of the accused and convicted people were women? According to Bever (2002:

968), both genders have similar capacities for aggression, but they manifest them rather differently: men are more likely than females to use direct physical aggression, whereas females are prone to use indirect aggression, spreading gossip, manipulating surrogates, and other covert attacks. This would at least partly explain why women would have been more eager to accuse others and also be targets for accusations.

In addition to gender, power relations and social hierarchies in Salem, as in other witch-hunts, played an important role. As a general trend we can conclude that those who were convicted were elderly women from the less well-to-do end of the social ladder, and in many cases women with some dubious personal experiences in their past, and thus socially more vulnerable. There must have been some kind of “crisis of confidence,” scepticism, religious scruples, legal concerns and probably some medical problems in Salem at the time of the outbreak and during the hunt (Bever 2002: 955).

## 2. Earlier studies

Several studies from the past few years touch upon questions around the discourse patterns and strategies, the role of the scribes, the transmission of documents and obviously the way and circumstances in which they were written, with reference to the Salem documents, but also to trials in Early Modern England. Archer (2002 and 2005), for example, takes a close look at answers and questions from a sociopragmatic point of view, and points out the controlling role the examiners played in the discourse at Salem. She also refers to the attitude of the judges – “guilty but unwilling to confess,” which reflects the general trend. Question-and-answer patterns are also examined in Doty and Hiltunen (2002), where they pay particular attention to the narrative patterns and confessions in the socio-historical context along Labovian lines; Hiltunen (1996, 2004, 2010) pays attention to the questioning strategies of both parties of the trial, even to the counterquestions that examinees often resort to. The role of the recorders or the scribes has also been searched by Peter Grund (2007) and recently also by Hiltunen and Peikola (2007), to mention just a few. As a very recent source of inspiration for a study on the role of gender (or sex), and many other aspects, in trial documents is *Early Modern English Dialogues: Spoken Interaction as Writing* by Jonathan Culpeper and Merja Kytö (2010). They talk about how the identities of participants in their data are linguistically constituted in their socio-historical contexts, and they pay a lot of attention to one aspect of identity – gender (307). Their “way to gender [is] via situated social role pairs, both asymmetric (e.g. examiner/examinee) and symmetric,” a symmetric role pair not really being relevant in trial examinations. One of their caveats to be kept in mind is the following remark (2010: 316):

Our hypothetical courtroom findings would not take account of the fact that women in the Early Modern courtroom only had access to a subset of situated activity roles constituting the trial, and this would obviously result in linguistic differences (e.g. women rarely asked the questions). Women were never judges, prosecution counsels, defence counsels or any other courtroom officials. Neither did they constitute the jury.

An interesting question is, indeed, whether gender can be seen as a relevant factor in the way the examinees answer the questions of the examiners. According to Culpeper and Kytö (2010: 332), “In public and formal discourse, women generally speak less than men in mixed-sex interactions, except in situations, such as the courtroom, where cooperation can be coerced.”

In studies of the Salem discourse and the strategies to which the accused people resorted to, politeness and face-saving along the lines suggested by Brown and Levinson (1987) and others have provided a relevant framework for the documents. A more recent approach to accused people’s response strategies in particular has been offered by the concept of self-face and self-politeness (see Chen 2001; Chaemsathong 2009). According to this approach, it is more realistic to examine the responses of the accused from the point of

view “what the accused thought others thought of them,” which is part of their “face” (Chaemsaithong 2009: 56). The self-politeness strategies allowed the examinees to defend themselves and also to restore, at least partly, their public image (*ibid.*). In many answers of the examinees these kinds of strategies can indeed be detected, and the four main strategies for self-politeness and self-face saving, namely (a) straightforward/baldly, (b) with redress, (c) off-record and (d) withhold self-face-threatening acts (SFTA) can be found in the Salem examinations and applied to the analysis (Chaemsaithong 2009: 69).

This paper is a qualitative survey of examination records from Salem, and more precisely of examinations of five women, out of whom two confessed to witchcraft and survived, and three denied guilt, were convicted and hanged or died in prison. The five women in focus are Tituba, Mary Warren, Sarah Osburn, Martha Cory and Susannah Martin. I will pay special attention to self-politeness strategies; the discourse type, i.e. relation between direct and reported speech; to verbosity; the role of Puritan religion as seen in the examinations and to a lesser degree gender. The format of the recordings and how it can possibly be associated with individual recorders will also be touched upon.

### 3. Five Salem women

In the cases of the two confessors Tituba and Mary Warren we have several examination documents, which provide interesting material for comparison between recordings by different scribes. In two earlier studies (Kahlas-Tarkka and Rissanen 2007, 2011), as well as in Rissanen (this volume), attitudes and talkativeness of the examinees have been in focus. Various discourse features, like use of figurative and emotional language, use of different sentence structures as well as aggressive expressions and laughter, seem to reflect different attitudes in the examinees (see especially the table in Kahlas-Tarkka and Rissanen 2011: 244). Those who confessed and those who denied guilt seem to resort to very different strategies in many cases. Reis (1998) argues that the confessions and denials made during witchcraft trials need to be understood from within the context of Puritan religious culture, where gender was also a relevant factor. Sinfulness was a feature of every Christian, but individuals found different ways to manage it, and these strategies also surfaced during the trials in various ways. Confessing sins and appealing to God was an alternative to accusing others and emphasizing one’s own innocence.

In questioning, the examiners were in the position of deciding where to lead the discourse, but the unknown factor was the reaction of the examinee. The responses of examinees are interesting also from the point of view of Gricean cooperativeness, as Archer (2002) has shown, as “conversational cooperation” can only be evaluated on the surface level, that is to say, on the basis of the dialogue as it appears in the document, no matter what the relationship might be between what is said and what may be implied.

#### 3.1 *Tituba*

Tituba, a slave of the Parris family, is probably one of the best known people in the accounts of the Salem hunt. Perhaps as one of the most inspiring sources for fiction and myths, Tituba has earned fame as the “fatal spark” to the whole chain of events. Rosenthal (1993) puts the myth around Tituba in a more realistic frame by reminding us that there is no evidence of her ever having practiced voodoo or rituals of witchcraft with the young people of the Parris household, even though she confessed to having been in the devil’s snare. Her ethnic background is not completely clear either, but most probably she was a Carib Indian, brought from Barbados by Parris himself.

As Tituba was one of the first people accused and examined, she did not have a model for a successful strategy, as it was a known fact that witchcraft was a deadly crime in the Puritan belief, and, for that matter, in the whole Christian faith. We can therefore assume that Tituba must have been confused about her role as an accused person and what was

expected of her. The basic assumption of guilt is clear from the very beginning of the examination, contrary to the present-day process of examining where no such standpoint would be allowed. Hiltunen (1996) and Archer (2002) have both studied the questioning strategies of magistrates and noted, amongst other things, that a very common opening strategy is a *wh*- question. The examiner has obviously the upper hand and can choose the way he approaches the person to be questioned. Tituba, however, is clearly a person with common sense and confidence, so that she is not easily upset by the somewhat aggressive opening of Hathorne, who is conducting the questioning. She starts with straightforward answers, hoping probably thus to convince the examiner of her innocence, in terms of preserving self-face, “baldly,” i.e. she does not seem to consider the opening very threatening to her face (Chaemsathong 2009: 69), but soon she expands them and starts accusing others, starting with the devil, thus probably hoping to direct attention away from herself, which may also signal her feeling that her face is more threatened. The common opening strategy with *wh*- questions is used along the three examinations in direct speech, even though also *yes/no* questions are used.

Tituba is skilled in social cooperation; she lets the examiner lead the “discussion” without trying to change its direction and without using any aggressive language (see also Kahlas-Tarkka and Rissanen 2011: 244). At the same time, she gets carried away by her own vivid description of the events, riding on poles, seeing all kinds of animals of different colours, etc. Her performance is a real show, and the examiner lets her go on without interfering too much. This is also noticeable in the early examinations, when nobody could probably foresee the numbers of accused people and their examinations.

The four extracts ([1]–[4] below) illustrate Tituba’s flow of speech (boldface mine), her verbosity and confident behaviour. The examinations recorded by Cheever (1) and Corwin (2) are both lengthy pieces of writing, mostly direct speech, but with indirect reporting alternating in a few instances. Turns are clearly indicated, either by (H) and (T) or by (Q) and (A), but at times the change is not obvious (see e.g. the lengthy reported speech section in quote (2) below). Cheever’s record (2) ends in a very dramatic way: Tituba says “I am blind now I cannot see.” One can only guess why the ending is so abrupt; she may have felt that she was losing control of the situation, not knowing how to continue – in other words a typical case of opting out to withhold a SFTA. On the other hand, the two long examinations recorded by Corwin only a day later more or less agree with the earlier one, apart from some added details, and it shows that Tituba maintained her humble attitude as well as her confidence. She is not a religious Puritan woman, and it is notable that she mentions God only in the examination recorded by Corwin (2). In the second examination on the following day, she also talks about a contract with the devil, which later becomes a very central issue in the examinations. Hers is the first mention of this kind of pact in the surviving documents, and “the Devil’s book” seems to be a special feature of the Salem discourse.<sup>2</sup>

(1) The <?>examination of Titibe<sup>3</sup>

(H) Titibe what ~~sp~~ evil spirit have you familiarity with (T) **none** (H) why do you hurt these children, (T) **I do not hurt them** (H) who is it then ~~the~~ (T) **the devil for ought I ken know** (H) did you never see the <?> devil, (T) **the devil came to me and bid me serve him** (H) who have you seen) (T) **4 women and sometimes hurt the children**, (H) who were they? (T) **goode Osburn and Sarah good and I do not know who the other were Sarah good and osburn would have me hurt the children but I would not** shee further saith there was a tale man of Boston that [“t” written over “w”] shee did see (H) when did you see them) (T) **Last night at Boston** (H) what did they say to you they said hurt the children, (H) and did you hurt them ~~ne~~ (T) **no there is 4 women and one man they hurt the s children and then lay all upon hure and they tell me if I will not hurt the children they will hurt me** (H) but did you not hurt them (T) **yes but I will hurt them no more** (H) are you not sorry that you did hurt them. (T) yes.

....

(H) doe you see who it is that torments these children now (T) **yes it is goode good shee hurts them in her own shape** (H) <&> who is it that hurts them now (T) **I am blind now I cannot see.**

(3. Examinations of Sarah Good, Sarah Osburn, & Tituba, as Recorded by Ezekiel Cheever)

(2) Q. Why doe you hurt these poor Children? Whatt harme have thay done unto you? A. **they doe noe harme to me <e> I noe hurt y<sup>m</sup> att all.** Q. Why have you done itt? A. **I have done nothing; I Can't Tell when y<sup>e</sup> Devill works** Q. what, doth y<sup>e</sup> Devill Tell you that he hurts y<sup>m</sup>? A. **noe he Tells me nothing.** Q. doe you never See Something appeare in Some shape? A. **noe never See anything.** Q. Whatt ffamilliarity have you w<sup>th</sup> y<sup>e</sup> devill, or w<sup>t</sup> is itt y<sup>t</sup> you Converse w<sup>th</sup>all? Tell y<sup>e</sup> Truth, Whoe itt is y<sup>t</sup> hurts y<sup>m</sup>? A. **the Devill for ought I know.** Q. w<sup>t</sup> appearanc or how doth he appeare when he hurts y<sup>m</sup>, w<sup>th</sup> w<sup>t</sup> shape or what is he like that hurts y<sup>m</sup>? A. **like a man, I think yesterday I being in y<sup>e</sup> Lentoe Chamber I saw a thing like a man, that Tould me Searve him & I Tould him noe I would nott doe Such thing.** she Charges Goody Osburne & Sarah Good as those y<sup>t</sup> hurt y<sup>e</sup> Children, and would have had hir done itt, she Sayth she hath Seen foure two of w<sup>ch</sup> she Knew nott, she Saw y<sup>m</sup> last night as she was Washing y<sup>e</sup> Roome, thay Tould me hurt the Children & would have had me gone to Boston, ther was .5. of y<sup>m</sup> w<sup>th</sup> y<sup>e</sup> man, **they Tould me if I would nott goe & hurt y<sup>m</sup> they would doe Soe to me att first I did agree w<sup>th</sup> y<sup>m</sup> butt afterward I Tould y<sup>m</sup> I doe Soe noe more** Q. would y<sup>a</sup> [= they] have had you hurt y<sup>e</sup> Children y<sup>e</sup> Last Night A. **yes, butt I was Sorry & I sayd, I would doe Soe noe more, but Tould I would ffeare God.** Q. butt why &<?>& did nott you doe Soe before? A. **why they Tell me I had done Soe before & therefore I must goe on,** these were the .4. Woemen & y<sup>e</sup> man, butt she Knew none but Osburne & Good only, y<sup>e</sup> other were of Boston.

...  
the Children haveing ffitts att this Very time she was asked whoe hurt y<sup>m</sup>, she Ans<sup>d</sup> Goody Good & y<sup>e</sup> Children affirmed y<sup>e</sup> Same, butt Hubbard being Taken in an Extreame ffit after she was asked whoe hurt hir & she Sayd she Could nott tell, butt Sayd they blinded hir, & would nott lett hir see & after y<sup>t</sup> was once or Twice taken  
dumb hir Self

Second Examination. March. 2. 1691/2

Q. What Covenant did you make w<sup>th</sup> y<sup>t</sup> man y<sup>t</sup> Came to you? what did he tell you. A. **he Tell me he god, & I must beleive him & Serve him Six yeares & he would give me many fine things.** Q. how long agone was this? A. **about Six Weeks & a little more, ffryday night before Abigall was Ill.** Q. w<sup>t</sup> did he Say you must doe more? did he Say you must Write any thing?

...  
Q. whatt did he Say you must doe in that book? A. **he Sayd write & Sett my name to itt.** Q. did you Write? A. **yes once I made a marke in y<sup>e</sup> Book & made itt w<sup>th</sup> red like Bloud.** Q. did he gett itt out of your body? A. **he Said he must gett itt out y<sup>e</sup> Next Time he Come againe, he give me a pin . . .**  
(6. Two Examinations of Tituba, as Recorded by Jonathan Corwin)

The lengthy extracts from two examination records clearly show that Tituba resorts to all four main strategies for self-politeness. In addition to the above-mentioned bald approach, as well as withholding SFTAs by opting out when she claims that she cannot see, she also acts with redress by shifting the blame to others, Sarah Osburn and Sarah Good, even though Sarah Osburn does not blame Tituba in her examination. Also, Tituba's verbosity is obvious. She gives colourful accounts of her experiences being cooperative at the same time. She does not show any aggression or despair or panic.

Contrary to the two long records of examinations by Cheever and Corwin, written very tightly without line-divisions between different speakers but mostly in direct speech, the short accounts of examinations of Tituba by Hathorne and Putnam have been recorded in reported speech. Hathorne has a very brief summary with the main points of the examination, whereas Putnam is slightly more elaborate, but much less clear in indicating the turn taking in the examination. The latter document is clearly defect and part of it missing, but even the short passage clearly shows that Putnam does not master the task of reporting as well as Hathorne seems to do.

(3) Salem Village  
March 1<sup>st</sup> 1691

Tituba vpon Examination, and after some denyall acknowledged y<sup>e</sup> matter of fact. according to her Examination giuen in more fully will appeare. and who also charged Sarah Good and Sarah Osburne with <y><sup>e</sup> same,

(4. Examinations & Mittimus of Sarah Good, Sarah Osburn, & Tituba, as Recorded by John Hathorne)

(4) what the Indyen woman saith

they haue don noe harme to the<m> {hur} shee saith shee doth nott know how the deuell works – Who is it that hurts them the deuell frot [= for ought] I know. there is fowre frott that hurts the children – 2 of the women are Gamer Osburn and gamer Good and they say itt is shee one of the ehld women is a tall and short women and they would haue hur goe to with them to boston and shee oned that shee did itt att furst butt butt she was sorry for itt:

(5. Examinations of Sarah Good, Sarah Osburn, & Tituba, as Recorded by Joseph Putnam)

### 3.2 Mary Warren

Mary Warren, the youngest woman of the five, in her 20s, a servant in the Procter family, clearly represents a lower layer socially. She is a particularly interesting case, as she appears as an afflicted person, a confessed witch and an accuser. She was examined several times, before and after being in prison. As many as four examination documents have survived, recorded between April 19 and May 12. She starts off with claiming innocence, and it is even implied that she might be suggesting the possibility of fraud, claiming that “the afflicted persons did but dissemble” (5). But she gradually changes her strategy to confessing. She also refers to apparitions that afflict her during her fits. After a few weeks in prison she became an accuser herself. Her examinations, recorded by Parris, an unidentified recorder (Hathorne?), Willard and Corwin, are even visually slightly different from each other and might be claimed to reflect both individual practices but also the speed and atmosphere of the examination. In Parris’s recording, the direct speech, mostly assigned to Mary Warren herself, does not stand out very clearly (the bold type is mine), as it is embedded in between comments and description of fits and recovery from fits, as well as the reporting clauses like *She saith/said*. Especially in Corwin’s record (8), a typical “space saving” record by him, no line divisions indicate questions and answers, but the layout provides a clear visual image of the examination containing long utterances by Mary Warren. To me this gives an impression that even the scribes possibly wanted to bring forth Warren’s somewhat hysterical reactions and behaviour, and perhaps even speed up the examination.

Mary Warren’s self-face-saving strategy can be traced in her answer to the opening question of her examination. She baldly states, “I am innocent.” She continues with giving an irrelevant remark (*I looke up..*) and then gradually also starts falling into fits. Chaemsathong (2009: 74) claims that off-record strategies often entail violations of one or more of the Gricean maxims. This is what happens in the case of Mary Warren, when she falls into (pretending?) fits and seems to lose control over her behaviour. She speaks a lot, and violates the quantity and the manner maxim as well, using very strong expressions, both appealing to God and referring to Satan, everything at once. Unlike Tituba, she clearly wants to emphasize her religiousness. A good Puritan woman needed to repent her obvious sins (Reis 1998: 58), and Mary Warren does this indeed when she pours out her intentions to confess her wrong-doings and asking God to help her.

(5) Mary Warren, You stand here charged with sundry acts of Witchcraft, what do you say for your self, are you guilty, or not?

**I am innocent.**

Hath she hurt you (speaking to the sufferers) Some were Dumb. Betty Hubbard testified ags<sup>t</sup> her, & then said Hubbard f<e>ll into a violent fit.

You were a little while agoe an Afflicted person, now you are an Afflicter: How comes this to pass?

**I looke up to God, & take it to be a great Mercy of God.**

What do you take it to be a great mercy to afflict others?

Betty Hubbard testified that a little after this Mary was well, she the said Mary, said that the afflicted persons did but dissemble.

...



Mary Warren continued a good space in a fit, ~~the~~ /that/ she did neither see, nor hear, nor speak. Afterwards she started up, & said **I will speak** & cried out, **Oh! I am sorry for it, I am sorry for it**, & wringed her hands, & fell a little while into a fit again: & then came to speak, but immediately her Teeth were set, & then she fell into a violent fit, & cried out, **Oh Lord help me, Oh good Lord save me!** And then afterwards cried again, **I will tell, I will tell**, & then fell into a dead fit again. And afterwards cried, **I will tell, they did, they did, they did**, & then fell into a violent fit again. After a little recovery she cried **I will tell, I will tell, they brought me me to it**; & then fell into a fit again: which fits continuing, she was ordered to be had out, & the next to be brought in, viz: Bridget Byshop

...  
Mary Warren called in, afterwards in private, before Magistrates & Ministers.

She said, **I shall not speak a word: but I will, speak I will speak satan** – she saith **she will kill me**.

**Oh!** she saith, **she owes me a spite, & will claw me off**

**Avoid Satan, for the name of God avoid.**

And then fell into fits again: & cried **will ye; I will prevent ye, in the Name of God**

(75. Examination of Mary Warren, recorder Parris)

Mary Warren's verbosity describes her own miserable and sinful state. At the same time, her repeated "I will tell, I will tell" indicates her willingness to cooperate with the examiners, as Doty and Hiltunen (2002) have also shown. She puts forth, very emphatically, that she has been possessed by the devil without any activity on her side. So, in spite of her admitting guilt, she wants to convince the examiner that it was not her choice to become a witch, if she is regarded as such. And clearly, she wants to accuse others of having coerced her to sign the book, i.e. make a contract with the Devil. And she is full of remorse, but especially after having been in prison, she is keen on accusing others. In (6) we have a typical example of Warren's new strategy to save her self-face, when she starts accusing others in a very collaborative manner. The additional note by the recorder at the end of the quote seems to imply that Warren had mildly blamed herself for not having paid attention to what book her mistress really had in her hand. Hiltunen (2004) also mentions the relevance of the place where the examinations were held. The fact that there was no big audience in prison may have also partly influenced the milder tone of the examination held in prison.

(6) Q. How did you come to know your Master, and Mistris were Witches? A. **The Sabbath Even after I had put up my note for thanks in publick, my Mistris appeared to mee, and puld mee out of the Bed, and told mee that she was a witch, and had put her hand to the Book, she told mee this in her Bodily person**, and that This Examinant might have known she was a Witch, if she had but minded what Books she read in.

(78. Examination of Mary Warren in Prison)

Contrary to Martha Cory's strategies (see below), Warren does not show strong negative attitudes towards her examiners and seems to bring forth her despair and remorse in the constant flow of talk; and she survived. It is known that Simon Willard (example 7) was much against the witch-hunt, and he was amongst the first ones to call for an end to the process. Rosenthal *et al.* (2009: 203) mention in a note to the Willard record that the continuing examination of Mary Warren appears to reflect the desire of her questioners to build their case against the Proctors, whose servant Warren was, as well as to establish the credibility of the regular accusers. The short extracts below seem to support this assumption, but it is also interesting to note the different way of recording the examination that Willard has adopted, if we compare it with Parris (5 above) and Corwin (8 below): reported speech overwhelmingly, but reported so that the key words stand out in the text (see e.g. the instances of "no" below). The examiner's questions are mostly given in the passive, but the strategic answers of Warren are clearly separated from the narrative without being recorded as direct speech. There is a laconic tone in the record in spite of the serious matter.

(7) after a fitt she cried out **I will tell: I will tell: thou wicked creature it is you stopt my mouth: but I will confess y<sup>e</sup> little that I have to confess** being asked: who she would: tell off whether goodwife Procter or no:

answered **o Betty Procter it is she: it is she I lived with last**

....

Coming out of another fit s<sup>d</sup> she would tell she would tell: she s<sup>d</sup> her Mast<sup>r</sup> {now} bid her not tell:

....

she was asked: whether she knew of any Images in y<sup>e</sup> hous: sayd **no**

....

she was asked whether y<sup>e</sup> devil never asked her consent: to: hurt in her shape answerd **no**: she had heard her master and mistris tell of images and of sticking of thorns in them: to hurt peple with

....

she was asked how it smelt: sayd very ugly to her

(80. Examination of Mary Warren, recorder Simon Willard)

The last record of the examination of Mary Warren is of May 12, recorded by Corwin, again in his typical “space saving” manner, so that no line divisions indicate questions and answers, but the layout provides a clear visual image of the examination, containing long utterances by Mary Warren. Towards the end, however, the reporting changes more and more to reported speech as well as introducing more and more names of suspected people. Hysteric outcries do not seem to occur during the hearing, and Warren has clearly managed to turn her confession to her own benefit and to saving her self-face. But spectral evidence seems to appear repeatedly in Warren’s statements, as well as the mysterious Devil’s book. By the time of the examination, there was not yet any clear support for the assumption that confession would mean survival. This was, however, obvious by September the same year.

(8) Mary Warrens Examination: May. 12th 1692

Q. Whether you did nott know, y<sup>t</sup> itt was y<sup>e</sup> Devill’s book when you Sighned?

A. I did nott know itt y<sup>n</sup> butt I know itt now, to be Sure itt was y<sup>e</sup> Devills book. in y<sup>e</sup> first place to be Sure I did Sett my hand to y<sup>e</sup> Devills book; I have considered of itt, Since you were here last, & itt was y<sup>e</sup> Devills book, y<sup>t</sup> my Master Procter brought to me, & he Tould me if I would Sett my hand to y<sup>t</sup> book I should be well; & I did Sett my hand to itt, butt y<sup>t</sup> w<sup>ch</sup> I did itt was done w<sup>th</sup> my finger, he brought y<sup>e</sup> Book & he Tould me if I would Take y<sup>e</sup> book & Touch itt that I should be well & I thought then y<sup>t</sup> itt was y<sup>e</sup> Devill’s Book. Q. Was there nott your consent to hurt y<sup>e</sup> Children, when y<sup>a</sup> [= they] were hurt? A. Noe S<sup>e</sup>, but when I was Afflicted, my master Procter was in y<sup>e</sup> Roome & said if y<sup>a</sup> are Afflicted, I wish y<sup>a</sup> were more Afflicted & you and all: I said ma<st>er, w<sup>t</sup> make you Say soe? he Answered because y<sup>a</sup> goe to bring out Innocent persones. I Tould him y<sup>t</sup> that could nott bee & Whether y<sup>e</sup> Devill Took advantage att y<sup>t</sup> I know nott to Afflict y<sup>m</sup> and one Night Talking about y<sup>m</sup> I said I did nott care though y<sup>a</sup> were Tormented if y<sup>a</sup> charged mee.

(145. Examination of Mary Warren, recorder Corwin)

### 3.3 Sarah Osburn

Sarah Osburn, about 50 years of age, was one of the first three women accused of witchcraft in Salem. “Rumor had it that she cohabited with her much younger second husband before she married him and that the couple conspired to deny the two sons of her former marriage their rightful inheritances” (Karlsen 1987: 262–263). The problem became more serious, as the farm to be inherited was next to the farm of John Putnam, who had been a friend of her deceased husband. So Sarah Osburn upset the social norms of the village: it was no surprise that the Putnam family was eager to accuse her of witchcraft. She did not confess, but was found guilty and died in prison before execution in May 1692.

Osburn’s attitude to her examiners is neutral, and she does not accuse any other individuals, even though she was told by Hathorne, her examiner, that Sarah Good had accused her of hurting the children. She is also the first person to refer to spectral evidence in her examination, relating that an Indian had appeared to afflict her in her sleep. She also refers to a voice. Osburn’s strategy may be influenced by her social status, which she must be aware of herself, but in spite of her neutral attitude she resorts to slight sarcasm by shifting the blame, thus saving her self-face: “I do not know that the devil goes about in my likenes



to doe any hurt.” Most of the questions put to her are *wh*- questions and her answers are sober and more toward the short end of the scale.

As a woman of a Puritan community, Osburn seems to be well aware of the importance of conforming to the normal religious behaviour of the village people. Therefore she claims to have attended the meeting of the congregation and had thus not obeyed the order of the devil not to go. There seems to be some miscommunication between the examiner and Osburn, as Hathorne insists on asking her why she had not gone to the meetings since. Osburn gives in and blames her sickness for that. To her misfortune, others, including her husband, joined in confirming that she had not been to meetings for a long time.

(9) Sarah Osburn her examination

(H) what evil spirit have you familiarity with (O) **none**. (H) have you made no contract with the devill (O) **I no I never saw the devill in my life** (H) why doe you hurt these children (O) **I doe not hurt them** (H) who doe you employ then to hurt them (O) **I employ no body**.

....

(H) Sarah good saith that it was you that hurt the children, (O) **I doe not know that the devil goes about in my likenes to doe any hurt** m<sup>r</sup> Harthon desired all thes chidren to stand up and looke upon her and see if they did know her. which they all did and every one of them said that shee this was -{one of} the woman that did afflict -{them} and that they had constantly seen her in {the} very habit that shee was now in three evidience do stand that shee said this morning that shee was more like to be bewitched then that shee was a witch. m<sup>r</sup> Harthon asked her what made her say so; shee answered that shee was frighted one time in her sleep and either saw or dreamed that shee saw a thing like an indian all black which did pinch her in her neck and pulled her by the back part of her -{head} to the dore of the house (H) did you never see anything else (O) **no**. it was said by some in the meeting house that shee had said that shee would never beleive that lying spirit any more. (H) what lying spirit is this hath the devil ever deceived you and been false to you

....

(H) why did you yeild thus far to the devil as never to goe to meeting since. (O) **alas I have been sike and not able to goe** her housband and others said that shee had not been at meeting thes yeare and two months.

(3. Examination of Sarah Osborn, recorder Cheever)

The above account of Osburn's examination recorded by Cheever is shorter and more neutral in tone than that of Tituba. This is probably due, at least partly, to the differences in the personalities of the two examinees. Both of the women belong to a less-privileged part of the community, but Tituba is bolder in a collaborative way, daring to take the risk of confessing and creating an outlet for her imagination and verbosity, whereas Osburn seems to conform more to the established role of women as the more silent part of the community. Still, she is brave enough to deny all contact with the Devil, even though she confirms her conversation with a "lying spirit," and stands by her firm conviction without any drama, appeal to God or acts of despair. The neutral tone is also emphasized by a relatively large amount of reported speech in such a short examination record.

The two brief accounts of the examination of Sarah Osburn by Hathorne and Putnam confirm Osburn's denial of guilt, Hathorne more elaborately than Putnam:

(10) Sarah Good Osburne vpon Examination denied y<sup>e</sup> matter of fact (viz) y<sup>t</sup> she ever vnderstood or vsed any Witchcraft or vsed any Witchcraft, or hurt any of y<sup>e</sup> aboues<sup>d</sup> children

The children abouenamed being all personally present accused her face to face which being don, thay ware all hurt afflicted and tortured very much:

....

she was Asked who then did it or who she Employed to doe it, she Answered she did not know y<sup>t</sup> y<sup>e</sup> diuell goes aboute in her likeness to doe any hurt. Sarah Osbur<n> being told y<sup>t</sup> Sarah Good one of her Companions had vpon Examination accused her. she notwithstanding denied y<sup>e</sup> same, according to her Examination. w<sup>ch</sup> is more at Large giuen in. as therein will appeare

(4. Examination & Mitimus of Sarah Good, Sarah Osburn, & Tituba, as Recorded by John Hathorne)

Rosenthal *et al.* (2009: 133) draw attention to a detail in Putnam's account, namely, that Putnam has distorted what Osburn said, if Cheever's account is to be trusted. Putnam

claims that Osburn herself had said that she would have been more likely bewitched than a witch, whereas what provides this information in Cheever's record is evidence from others. This again may reflect the negative attitude of the Putnam family towards Osburn.

(11) what Gamer Osborn saith

1 shee saith she had noe hand in hurting the children nether by hur self by instréments

<1-it> shee saith that ~~shee~~ saith that shee was more lickley beewicht then a wiche

shee said shee would neuer bee leaue the deuell 1 the deuell did propound to hur that shee should neuer goe to meting noe more

and att that time nothing was <?> suggested to hur elces

why did she pinch the young wo<o>eman, shee neuer did nor dont kno<w> who did

(5. Examinations of Sarah Good, Sarah Osburn, & Tituba, as Recorded by Joseph Putnam)

### 3.4 Martha Cory

According to Trask (1997: 125) Martha Cory was probably born in the late 1620s and had first been married to a man named Rich prior to her marriage to Giles Cory. She was accepted into membership in the village church in April 1690, and had a reputation of being a pious, intelligent but somewhat overbearing woman. Following her excommunication from the village church on September 14 and the death of her husband on September 19, Martha Cory was hanged on the twenty-second of September. In 1703 her excommunication was revoked by the village church. The accusation of Cory meant a change in the repertoire of the people accused, as Cory had become an esteemed member of the village church, despite her illegitimate son with Giles Cory before their marriage.

The lengthy quotation from Cory's examination gives us a clear idea of how the examination was conducted and how this "Gospel woman" managed to stand firm and defend her innocence.

(12) M<sup>r</sup> Hathorne. You are now in the hands of Authority tell me now why you hurt these persons

Martha Kory. **I do not.**

Who doth?

**Pray give me leave to goe** ["goe" written over "give"] **to prayer**

This request was made sundry times

We do not send for you to go to prayer

But tell me why you hurt these?

**I am an innocent person: I never had to do with Witchcraft since I was born. I am a Gosple Woman**

Do not you see these complain of you

**The Lord open the eyes of the Magistrates & Ministers: the Lord show his power to discover the guilty.**

...

**We must not beleive all that these distracted children say**

Cannot he tell you tell what that man whispered

**I saw no body**

But did not you hear.

**No, here was**

Extream agony of all the afflicted

If you expect mercy of God, you must look for it in Gods way by confession

Do you think to find mercy by aggravating your sins

**A true thing**

Look for it then in Gods way

**So I do**

Give glory to God & confess then

**But I cannot confess**

Do not you see how these afflicted do charge you

**We must not beleive distracted persons**

Who do you improve to hurt them.

**I improved none**

...

Here are more than two that accuse you for witchcraft what do y<sup>u</sup> say

**I am innocent**

Then Mr Hathorn read farther of Croslys evidence

What did you mean by that the Devil could not stand before you

She denyed it

3. or.4. Sober witnesses confirm'd it.

**What can I do many rise up against me**

Why confess

**So I would if I were guilty**

Here are sober persons what do you say to them

You are a Gosple woman, will you lye

Abigail cryed out next Sab: is sacrament day, but she shall not come there

Kory **I do not care**

You charge these children with distraction: it is a note of distraction when persons vary in a minute, but these fix upon you, this is not y<sup>e</sup> manner of distraction –

**When all are against me w<sup>t</sup> can I help it**

Now tell me y<sup>e</sup> truth will you, why did you say that the Magistrates & Ministers eyes were

blinded you would open them

She laught & denyed it.

...

What do you say to all these thing<s> that are apparent

**If you will all go hang me how can I help it.**

Were you to serve the Devil ten years tell how many

She laught

....

Who is your God

**The God that made me**

Who is that God

**The God that made me**

What is his name

**Jehovah**

Do you know any other name

**God Almighty**

Doth he tell you that you pray to that he is God Almighty

**Who do I worship but y<sup>e</sup> God y<sup>t</sup> made**

How many Gods are there

**One**

How many persons

**Theree**

(16. Examination of Martha Cory, recorder Parris)

Cory appeals to God not only to confirm her innocence but also to correct the false accusations made by the examiners. This was no doubt regarded as insulting and certainly did not help her in the trial. Her attitude is strongly negative, her answers pertinent and sober, not hysterical, and she denies her guilt consistently throughout the examination. She does not use figurative language but expresses herself in a very straightforward manner. We could say that she has the upper hand when she evinces a kind of protective and understanding attitude when she says *we must not believe distracted persons*. And she does not allow the examiners to lead her astray in any manner. Even her longer utterances are on the shorter side, and without being aggressive, she is quite bold and even sarcastic, laughing several times during the trial. But the number of utterances she makes is highest of the data consulted for this study (see also Kahlas-Tarkka and Rissanen 2011: 244), and this may be due to the fact that she was indeed an esteemed member of the community, considered to be pious in spite of her somewhat disreputable past, i.e. her illegitimate son, and therefore she had to be examined very carefully in order not to end up with a hasty sentence. It is also noteworthy that her examination is one of the earlier ones, when there was still time for the examinations and no pressure to rush forward in order to cope with a large number of accused people, as was the case later on.

In terms of self-face and strategies of saving it, Cory is very talented and is one of the bravest challengers of the motives for her being accused. She uses rhetorical questions,

presents positive aspects of herself, replies with a question, opts out at times by asking for permission to go to prayer, behaves even in a slightly condescending, “motherly” or protective manner and is bold enough to laugh, which in fact threatens her self-face. On the whole, she gives the impression of a sincere, bold woman, who may have believed in the power of her social standing and religious conviction as strong enough means to make the examiners believe in her innocence.

Rosenthal *et al.* (2009: 148) note that this recording is Parris’s first in the judicial procedures of 1692. Questions and answers are clearly presented, and the layout helps to see the turn-taking. Mostly in direct speech, but with short remarks as reported speech, the recording gives an impression of conscientious reporting of the procedure. There is no evidence for what Parris may have thought of a distinguished member of the church being accused of witchcraft, but he maintains a certain distance and does not show any emotional involvement in his way of recording.

### 3.5 Susannah Martin

The sixty-seven-year-old widow Susannah Martin of Amesbury and Salisbury was accused of witchcraft twice, once in 1669, when she was not found guilty, and the second time in Salem, where she was found guilty and hanged as a witch on July 19, 1692 (Karlsen 1987: 262). She was a widow, close to 70 years old and accused by the young girls of Salem as well as her neighbours. She maintained her innocence to the end, but probably her earlier history as an accused person helped make her a natural target for accusations. Karlsen also considers Martin a potential victim because of her activity in a dispute over her father’s will, where she maintained her right to inherit property.

There are similarities in Martin’s and Cory’s discourse. Both have a strong negative attitude to their examiners (see also Kahlas-Tarkka and Rissanen 2011: 244), and Martin resorts to definite denial of guilt but at the same time turns to means to protect her self-face, by laughing and strong argumentation against the accusations. Where she is different from Cory is that she does not try to convince her examiner of her being a good Christian, even though she wants to “lead herself to the word of God.” Her attitude is more sarcastic, as she is making fun of religious discourse (*Amen, amen. A false tongue will never make a guilty person.*) She is very daring, even obstinate, as she seems to ignore completely what the others may think of her. She takes the liberty to address her examiner as “Sweetheart”. But she also stands by the truth and clearly does not want to save her life by telling a lie.

(13) The Examination of Susan: Martin. 2. May 1692

As soon as she came in many had fits.

Do you know this Woman

Abig: ·{Williams} saith it is Goody Martin she hath hurt me often.

Others by fits were hindered from speaking.

Eliz: Hubbard said she hath not been hurt by her.

John Indian said he hath not seen her

Mercy Lewes pointed to her & fell into a little fit.

Ann Putman threw her Glove in a fit at her

The examinant laught.

What do you laugh at it?

**Well I may at such folly.**

Is this folly? The hurt of these persons?

**I never hurt man woman or child.**

...

What ails this people?

**I do not know.**

But w<sup>t</sup> do you think?

**I do not desier to spend my judgm<sup>t</sup> upon it.**

Do not you think they are Bewitcht?

**No, I do not think they are?**

Tell me your thoughts about them.

**Why my thoughts are my own, when they are in, but when they are out they are anothers.**

You said their Master – Who do you think is their Master?

**If they be dealing in the black art, you may know as well as I.**

Well what have you done towards this?

**Nothing.**

Why it is you, or your appearance.

**I cannot help it.**

That may be your Master

**I desire to lead my self according to the will of God. word of God.**

Is this according to Gods word?

**If I were such a person I would tell you the truth**

....

Pray God discover you, if you be guilty.

**Amen. Amen. A false tongue w<ill> never make a guilty person.**

You have been a long time coming to the Court to day, you can come fast enough in the night. Said Mercy Lewes

**No, sweet heart,** said the Examinant

And then Mercy Lewes, & all, or many of the rest, were afflicted

John Indian fell into a violent fit, & said it was that woman, she bites, she bites, <&> then sh<e> was biting her lips

Have you not compassion for these afflicted

**No, I have none**

(104. Examination of Susannah Martin, recorder Parris, draft copy)

Martin's examination was recorded by Parris, much in the same format as for Cory. There are two versions by him, which are very similar to each other. One notable difference is that Martin's laughter is mentioned twice in the draft copy, and only once in the final version. The major part of the document is recorded as direct speech, and the comments as to the behaviour of the audience in the examination are brought to the minimum, which could possibly be assigned to Parris's attempt to keep himself at a distance in an examination which seems to be leading to a death sentence.

#### 4. Concluding remarks

The above survey of the examinations of five Salem women by no means gives a full picture of all the examinations recorded during the witch-hunt of 1692. The fact that the majority of the people accused in Salem were women (141 out of 185), and 13 out of the 19 hanged, automatically begs the question of why that was the case. There is no straightforward answer to that, but one can speculate how important factors the social hierarchies, Puritan beliefs and gender roles within the framework of social psychology might be. Rissanen (this volume) takes a close look at one male case and examines, amongst other things, the strategies Jacobs resorts to in his examination. The present study includes a selection of five women, who represent different age groups, social standings and personalities.

Close reading the examinations of Tituba, Mary Warren, Sarah Osburn, Martha Cory and Susannah Martin has shown that the very uneven amount of material available is bound to influence our understanding of each individual case and the people involved. I hope to have been able to show, however, that the different personalities have resorted to very different strategies in their examination discourse, which has obviously also been influenced by the examiner and the recorder. The approach through strategies for saving self-face has turned out to be fruitful, as Chaemsathong (2009) has shown. The language of the examinations varies considerably, but it cannot be studied out of context, that is, out of the socio-historical context, including aspects of religion, hierarchies and even socio-linguistic

factors like age and gender. The examination records offer a wealth of material to be studied along these lines, and much remains to be done in this fascinating area, which is also bound to lead to emotional involvement.

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## NOTES

- 1 Much of the research done on this article has been inspired by collaboration with Matti Rissanen, the other Helsinki member of the Salem project team (see the Introduction to this volume).
- 2 In a note to document 6, Rosenthal (Rosenthal *et al.* 2009: 136) claims that “[t]his contract, including signing of the Devil’s book, represents an historical feature of witchcraft in the Christian tradition”. Henri Kauhanen, on the other hand, notes that a collocation with “the Devil” and “pact” or “contract” or “book” does not appear at all in *Malleus Maleficarum*, the “handbook” of European witchcraft (personal communication).
- 3 All quotations of documents are from Rosenthal *et al.* (2009) and the numbers of the documents follow the numbering in that volume.

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